

THE JUG WITH GOLD COINS



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A Moldavian Folk Tale

GRIGORE BOTEZATU

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Translated by Irina ZHELEZNOVA
Drawings by A. Sviatchenko

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Once upon a time there lived a man who had three sons. The sons grew up and were big and sturdy lads but loafers all three who hated work of any kind.

The father toiled the year round, he worked now in the vineyard, now in the orchard, now in field, and he fed and clothed his sons, but the sons never did a stroke of work and only sat in the shade or went bathing in the Dniester.

It was lucky the father took such pains tilling the soil, for he gathered a rich harvest every autumn, and in his hands the vineyard, orchard and field were priceless treasures.

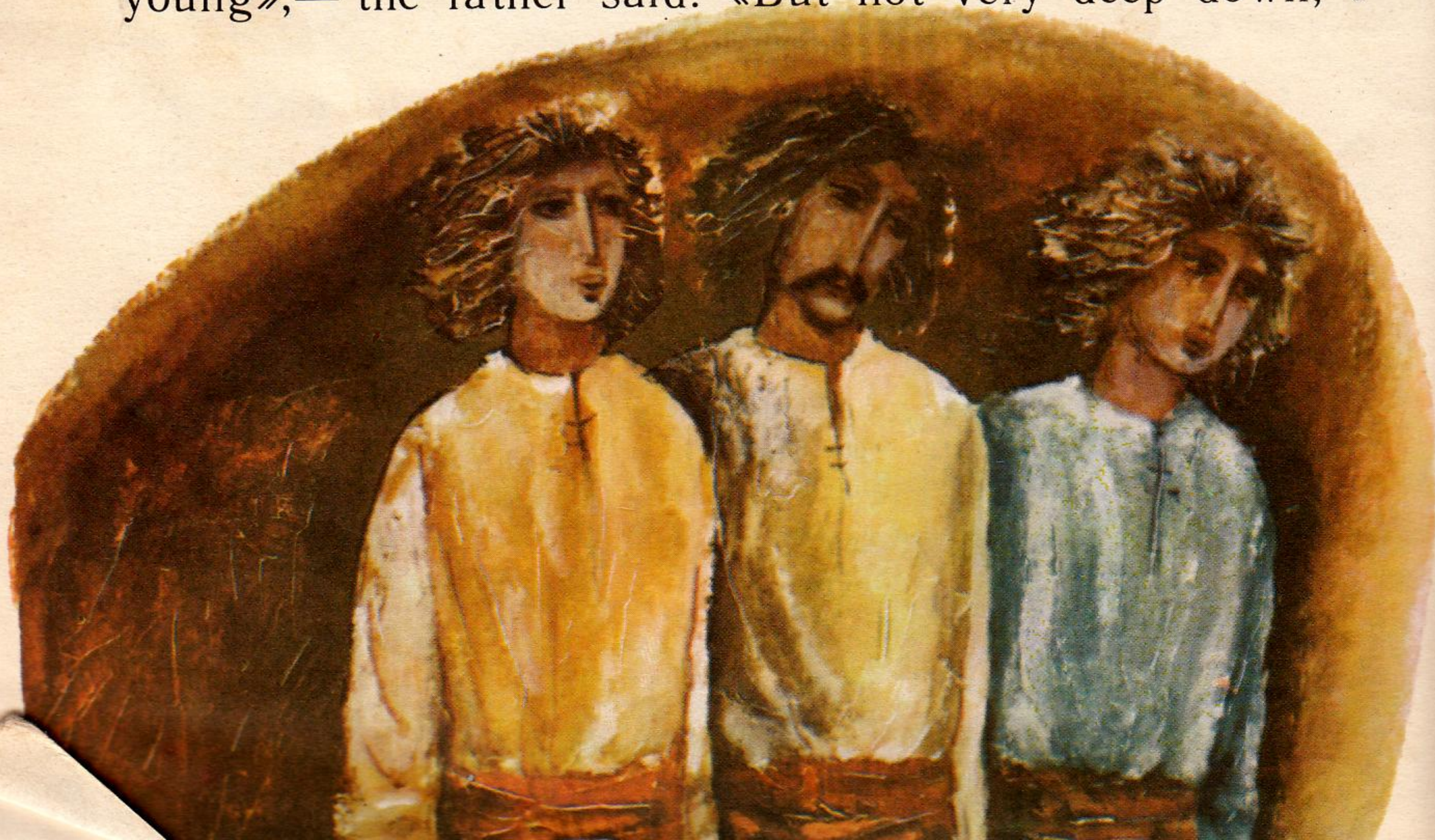
The years passed, and the father's beard was now as white as snow. He saw that old age was upon him, that his

strength was ebbing and that he could no longer care for his sons the way he had, and so he decided to turn over his land to them and all he had been able to amass at the price of such wearing labour as well. He also wanted to tell them a secret.

One day he called them to his bedside and said: «My dear children, I cared for my whole life long and toiled day in and day out in order that you might not want for anything. But now that my end is close there is nothing I have to leave you save this hut and also the vineyard, orchard and field. But know this: somewhere here a great treasure lies buried, a whole jug of gold. Dig up the land and find it, and it will be yours.»

«But where is this jug buried, Father, how deep down?» the sons asked.

«I don't remember that, I buried it when I was young»,— the father said. «But not very deep down, I







think. Dig as deep as the blade will go, from vine to vine in the vineyard, from tree to tree in the orchard and from boundary to boundary in the field, and you're sure to find it!»

The old man died, and his sons were left alone. They laid their father to rest, and the youngest of them, who was also the cleverest of the three, said:

«Nobody is going to feed us now, brothers, no, nor even give us a crust of bread. Do you remember what father said before he died? Let's dig up the vineyard



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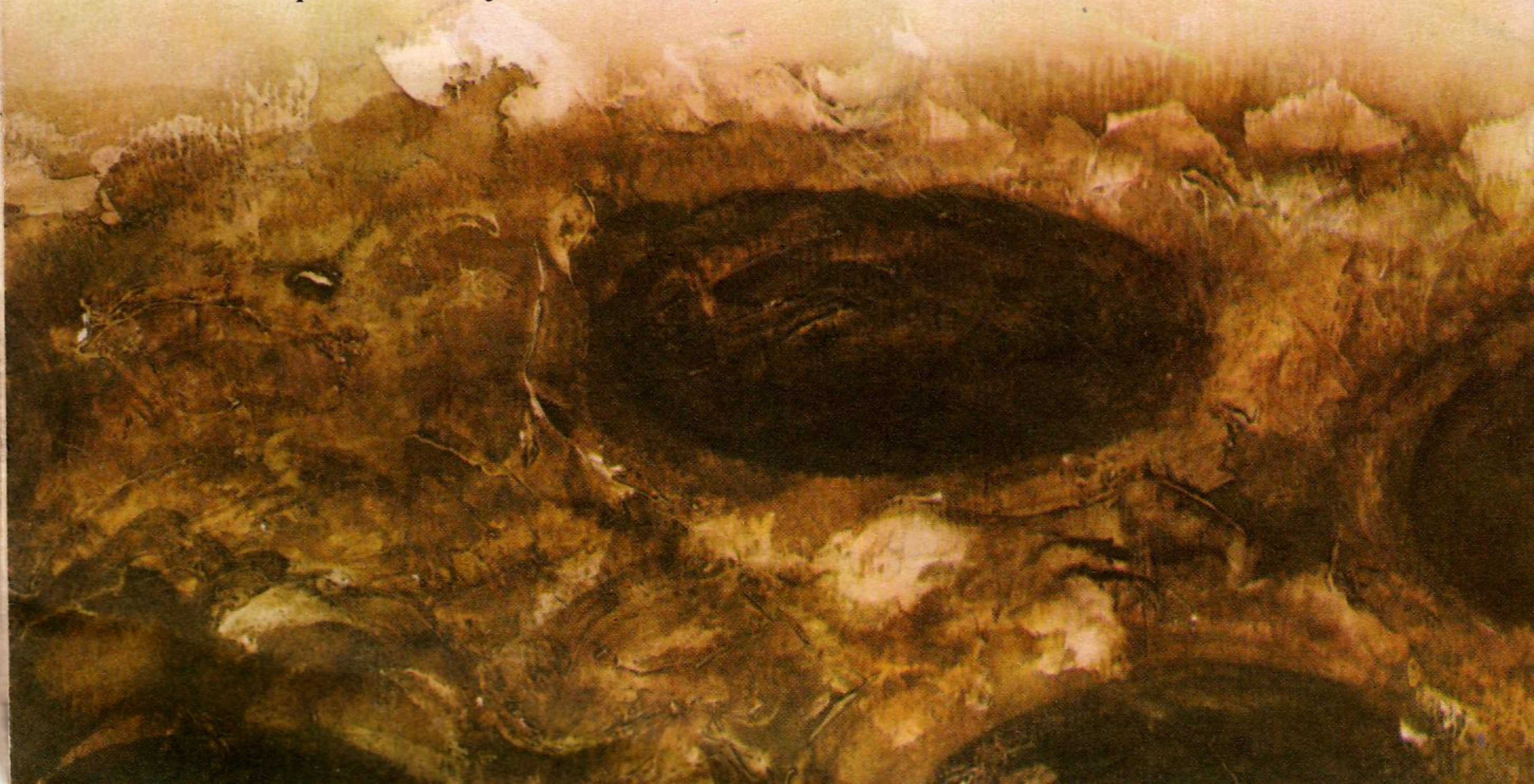
and perhaps we'll find the treasure and lead a life of ease again.»

Next morning they rose when it was still dark, took the biggest spades they had in order to dig deeper and set to work in the vineyard. They dug first in one place, then in another, but though they made a whole lot of holes there, and in the field too, they found nothing.

The brothers grew sad.

«If we go on making these holes,» the youngest of the three said, «we'll never find anything. Let's dig up the whole of the land.»

The brothers took their spades and, being eager to find the treasure, began digging up the field. They dug for a day and another and a third, but no jug did they find! When they reached the very end of the field, the eldest brother's spade struck something that made a jangling sound. The brothers lost their hearts. They scraped away the soil and saw that what the spade had





struck was a stone slab. They began trying to loosen the slab and pull it out of the earth, and lo!—water, cool and transparent, shot forth from under it. Instead of the jug of gold they had found a spring!

One of the brothers said:

«Do not grieve, lads! Let's dig a well here. It's always been hard to carry water from the other one, it's so far away from our place.»

They dug a well, fased it with stone, fashioned a sweep and a trough for the cattle, and it came out as fine as you could find nowhere! The water had a pleasant taste and there was a lot of it, enough for everybody, and people from all over the neighbourhood began coming there for it. And as for the brothers, they set to work anew, and, eager to find the pot, dug up the whole of the vineyard, the field and the orchard.

They found nothing again, and the eldest brother looked at the field and said:





«It's sowing time now, so why don't we sow the field, and maybe something will come out of it. At least all our labour will not have been wasted.»

They sowed the field with wheat the way their father used to and they weeded and watered it, and the yield was so big as never before! And they got a rich harvest of grapes from the vineyard and of fruit from the orchard as well.

The brothers divided these riches among themselves and began digging up the land again.

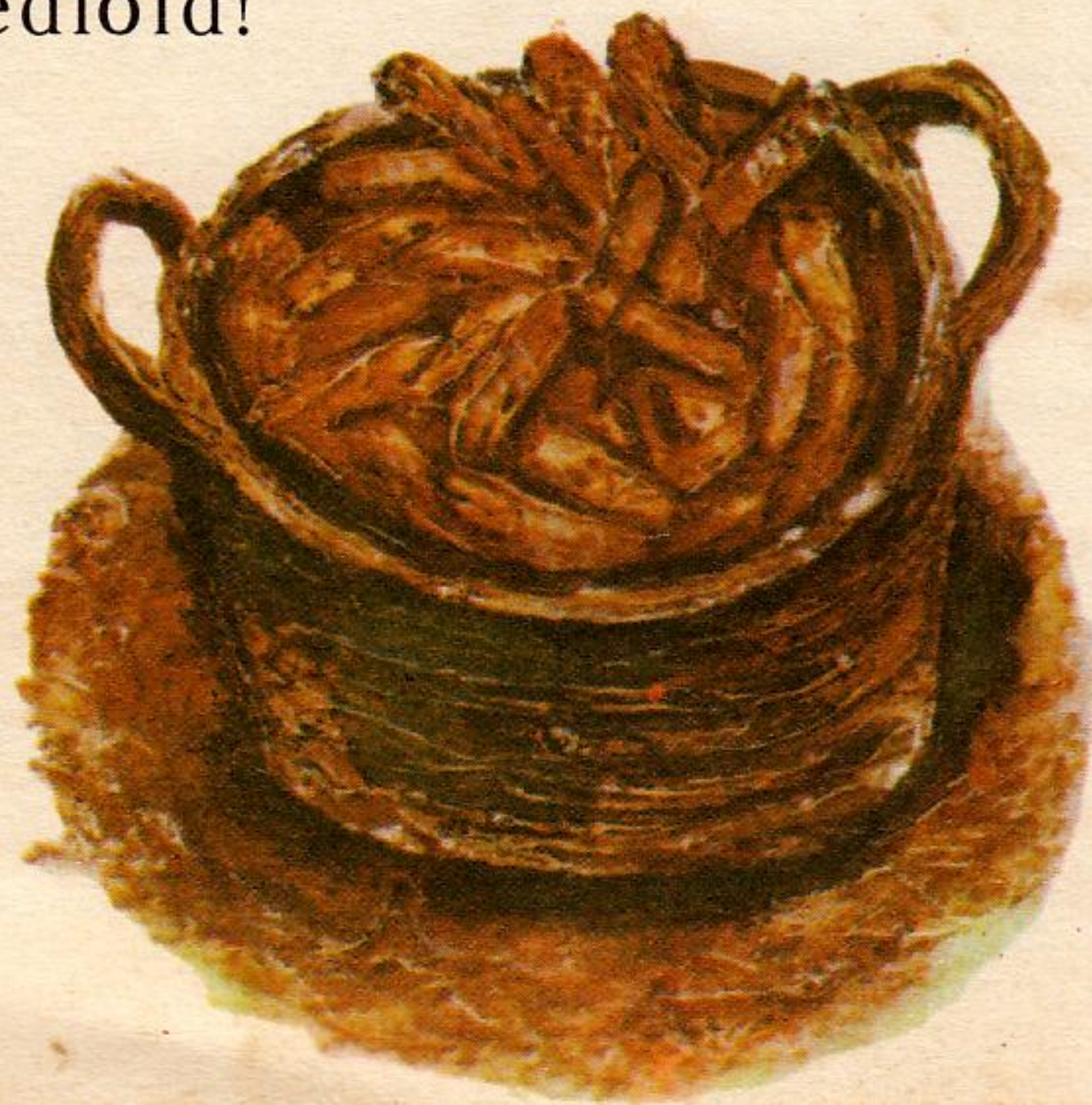
The second brother said:

«It's no use, we're only wasting our time, there's no treasure here!»

And the youngest brother looked at him and said:

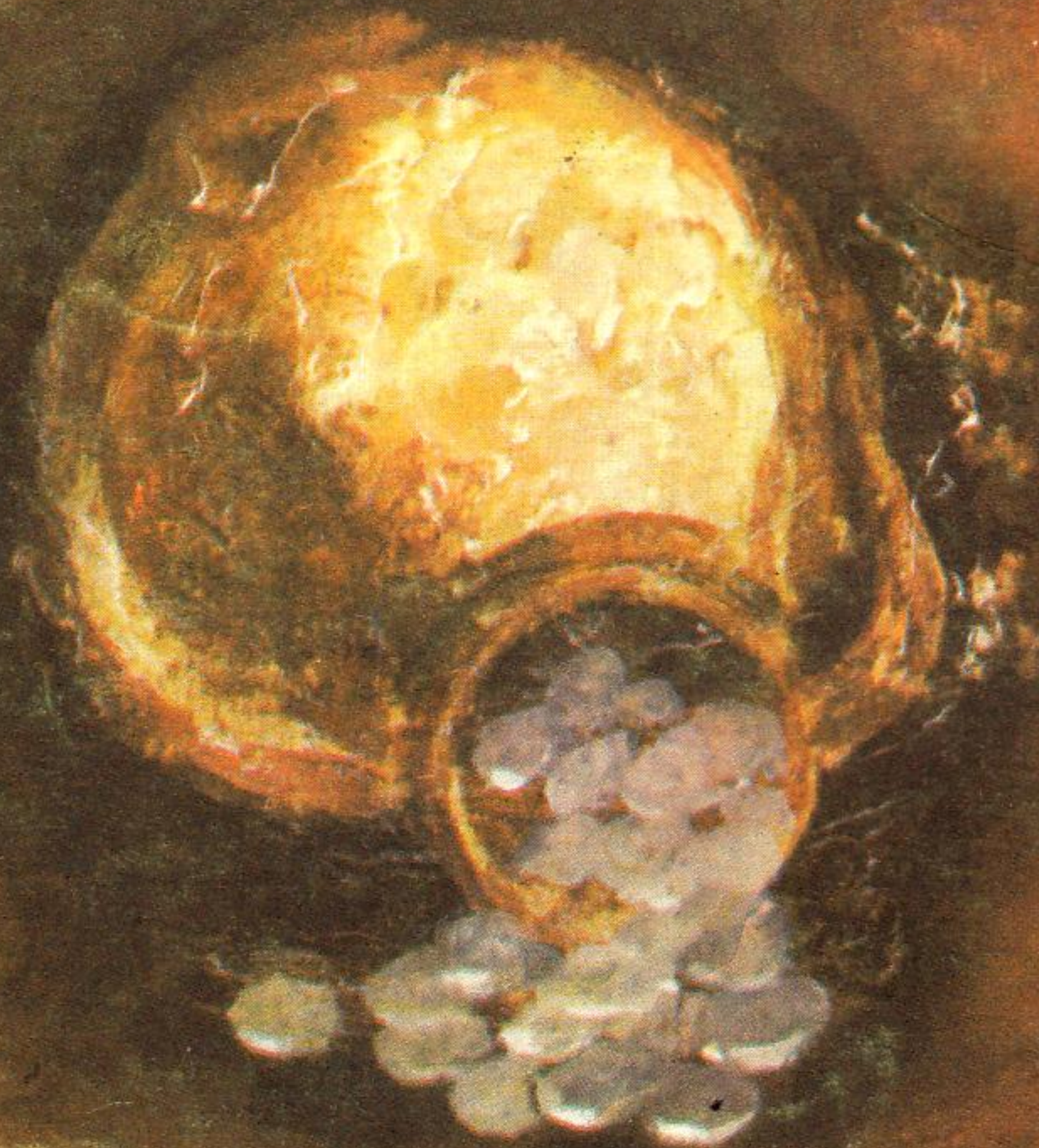
«I know now what Father meant when he told us about the jug of gold. He had a good harvest in mind. If we work hard we will have it; if we don't, we'll be left with nothing!»

And the other two realized that he was right and that their father had indeed been wise! They knew that they had not laboured in vain and decided to till the land and work hard in order that it might yield up its treasures to them. For it is your labour that is always repaid a hundredfold!





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Переводчик *Ирина Львовна Железкова*
Художник *Арий Феодосьевич Святченко*

Издательство «Литература артистикэ»
277004, Кишинев, пр. Ленина, 180.

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